

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL PERTH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 777

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PERTH 0013

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, EINV, EMIN, AS, UK, GW, (COURT, SIR CHARLES W.M.)

SUBJECT: VISIT OF WEST AUSTRALIAN PREMIER, SIR CHARLES COURT, TO
LONDON

REF: PERTH 311 AND 4 NOTAL

BEGIN SUMMARY: SIR CHARLES COURT, WEST AUSTRALIAN PREMIER WILL
VISIT LONDON AND WEST GERMANY FOR A WEEK FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO
U.S. AS IN U.S., MAIN PURPOSE WILL BE TO CONSULT WITH PRESENT
AND POTENTIAL INVESTORS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MINERAL AND
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. IN ADDITION, PREMIER WILL PROBABLY
ASSERT THE OPPOSITION OF HIS AND CERTAIN OTHER AUSTRALIAN STATES
TO ELIMINATION OF THEIR REMAINING CONSTITUTIONAL TIES DIRECTLY TO
BRITISH GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING VISIT OF PREMIER COURT AND THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
INVESTMENT AND TECHNICAL MISSION TO U.S., JANUARY 11 TO 23, HE
AND THE MISSION WILL SPEND THE PERIOD JANUARY 24 TO 31 IN OR
BASED IN LONDON. DURING THAT PERIOD THE PREMIER AND SOME
MEMBERS OF HIS MISSION WILL VISIT FRANKFURT AND DUSSELDORF
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WHILE OTHER MEMBERS MAY VISIT LIBYA.

2. PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF MISSION IN UK AND FRG WILL BE, AS IN U.S., TO (A) PROMOTE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF WA'S IMPRESSIVE MINERAL RESOURCES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE FOREIGN INVESTORS AND (B) CONVINCE THEM THAT THEY SHOULD BE GUIDED MORE BY COOPERATIVE POLICIES OF WA AND OTHER STATE GOVERNMENTS THAN BY NEGATIVE VIEWS OF THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.

3. VISIT TO LIBYA WILL BE IN CONNECTION WITH WA AGRICULTURAL, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION NOW THERE.

4. PREMIER'S VISIT TO LONDON FOLLOWS THAT OF AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM WHO REPORTEDLY HAS SOUGHT SUPPORT OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN ELIMINATING CERTAIN CONSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES WHICH PLACE AUSTRALIAN STATES IN DIRECT RELATION TO LONDON. THESE VESTIGES OF PRE-FEDERATION DAYS INCLUDE DIRECT APPEAL TO PRIVY COUNCIL FROM STATE SUPREME COURTS AND APPOINTMENT OF STATE GOVERNORS BY THE CROWN UPON ADVICE OF STATE MINISTERS RATHER THAN CANBERRA GOVERNMENT. NEWS ARTICLES FROM LONDON HAVE INDICATED PROBABLE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR WHITLAM.

5. PREMIER COURT, A LIBERAL AND STRONG STATES' RIGHTER, HAS TAKEN INCREASINGLY FIRM STAND AGAINST "CENTRALIZING" POLICIES OF FEDERAL, LABOR, GOVERNMENT AND HAS RECENTLY CALLED FOR FORMATION OF A JOINT SECRETARIAT OF THE AUSTRALIAN STATES TO COORDINATE THEIR DEFENSES AGAINST WHAT CONSIDERED TO BE FEDERAL LABOR PARTY ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE THE ROLE OF THE STATES AND EVENTUALLY ELIMINATE THEM. COURT HAS FREQUENTLY CONCERTED WITH QUEENSLAND PREMIER, AND HAS COOPERATED WITH OTHER STATES, IN DEFENDING STATES' RIGHTS. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS PREMIER WILL ATTEMPT IN LONDON TO OPPOSE THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES REPORTEDLY URGED BY WHITLAM AND MAY BE IN POSITION TO SPEAK FOR QUEENSLAND AND CERTAIN OTHER STATE PREMIERS, SOME OF WHOM MAY JOIN HIM IN LONDON.

6. PREMIER HAS INDICATED TO CONSUL THAT HE DOES NOT EXPECT BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT TO BE SYMPATHETIC WITH ANY APPEAL BY THE STATES TO RETAIN CONSTITUTIONAL TIES CITED ABOVE BUT WOULD HOPE TO GAIN SOME SUPPORT IN OPPOSITION CIRCLES. HIS CLOSEST ADVISOR ON MISSION EXPECTS LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE TO COME FROM PREMIER'S
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CONSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS AND NOTES LACK OF SOLID LEGAL PREPARATIONS. HOWEVER PRESS STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES ENCOURAGING BUSINESS LEADERS TO LOOK TO THE STATES RATHER THAN CANBERRA AS THE AUTHENTIC VOICE OF AUSTRALIA MAY MAKE SOME PUBLIC IMPACT, ESPECIALLY IN NEWS REPORTS IN PERTH AND ELSEWHERE IN AUSTRALIA. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES INVOLVING UK ARE IN ANY EVENT LARGELY SYMBOLIC AND FAR LESS IMPORTANT TO THE STATES THAN ISSUES OVER THEIR FINANCIAL AUTONOMY AND CONTROL OF MINERAL DEVELOPMENT.

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